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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000656

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM, INR/B
STATE PASS USAID FOR ASIA/SCAA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2020

TAGS: [PRE](#) [EAI](#) [TU](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: SEEKING PROGRESS IN U.S.-TURKISH COOPERATION IN
AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry for Reasons 1.4(b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Turkish Ambassador to Kabul Basat Ozturk told Ambassador February 6 that Turkey wants closer cooperation with the U.S. in development projects, including what it hopes will be a marquee project to refurbish Kabul's largest public hospital. Ambassador Eikenberry agreed that we should explore more collaboration on development projects, and USAID will explore the hospital option. However, to be most effective, the Ambassadors agreed that we should prioritize our work and focus on a few key projects first. Turkish police training in Wardak has been effective and Ankara wants to do more, including hosting 3-4,000 Afghan National Police at a training site in Turkey. Turkey is impatient to move ahead in what Ozturk said would be a matter of weeks with setting up its second Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), in Jowzjan Province, regardless of unresolved differences with the Swedes and Germans over maintenance of provincial security. Ankara is carefully courting greater Indian involvement in Afghanistan. Cultural and historic affinities here do lend Turkey advantages in Afghanistan, but its results in Wardak Province have been mixed. On-going differences with allies and partners in the north at this time over the proposed Jowzjan PRT are not helpful. Ambassador Ozturk has great ambitions for Afghanistan and greater US-Turkish cooperation on the ground. We support these goals, but given the relative lack of Turkish capacity here will need to work carefully with Ozturk to ensure work is prioritized and consistent with an Afghan-led agenda. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

TURKEY AS LONG-TERM, STRATEGIC PARTNER IN AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (U) Ozturk was accompanied by Turkish Wardak aid program (TIKA) Coordinator Mikail Tasdemir, Wardak PRT Head Turker Ari, Mazar-e-Sharif Consul General Ozgun Arman, and DCM Onur Katmerci for a working lunch hosted by Ambassador. Joining Ambassador were AID Mission Director, Deputy CDDEA, POLCOUNS, POL-MIL COUNS, INL/NAS Director, and ECON and IPA reps.

¶3. (C) Ozturk explained that Turkey's interest in Afghanistan is long-term, founded on historic ties, and based on Turkey's self-interest in the region. Unlike some other NATO allies who may feel an obligation to have a presence in Afghanistan and who are "counting the days" until they can withdraw, Ozturk asserted, Turkey's own interests in the region will keep it engaged in development programs for many years to come. Its contributions can be invaluable, Ozturk claimed, because Turks are "in touch with the people" of Afghanistan, and the Turkish people support the work being done by its PRT in Wardak.

¶4. (C) U.S.-Turkish bilateral consultations should be based on strategic assessments; not all of our allies have the strategic sense or ability to do this, Ozturk told us. In organizing the Istanbul meeting on Afghanistan last month,

Turkey had wanted to invite India (until Pakistan objected) because Turkey believes India must have a greater role in assisting Afghanistan. Underscoring the historic significance of President Gul's visit to New Delhi beginning February 7 in what he said is the first state visit ever by a Turkish president to India, Ozturk revealed that Turkey is actively courting additional "quiet" Indian development assistance in Afghanistan to fill an important regional gap. Turkey will push for Indian participation in future multilateral meetings. Additional Indian aid must have minimum visibility, however, in order to avoid misinterpretation by Pakistan, said Ozturk. He added that Turkey views India as a source of stability in the region, while Pakistan is a "state in trouble" in need of "psychological help." Ultimately, stability in Afghanistan will require harmony between the two.

COOPERATION ON "MODEL PROJECTS"

¶ 15. (C) Turkey believes current national Afghan development plans are inadequate in the areas of infrastructure, transport, and particularly in education and health care. Ozturk noted that discussion of health care needs had dominated the recent meeting between Presidents Karzai and Gul in Istanbul. Ozturk urged closer cooperation between Turkey and the U.S. on development projects, and proposed that respective Embassy staffs meet on a monthly basis to review specific "model projects" on which we might collaborate. Ambassador Eikenberry agreed that we should cooperate more, and suggested that a short list of specific joint projects be developed, and we should "make them work

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and make them symbolic." Ambassador Eikenberry suggested Turkey participate in a planned Donors meeting on development plans for the city of Kabul. Especially in light of the upcoming Kabul Conference, Ozturk confirmed Turkey's interest in providing aid to the capital, and noted that with Turkey currently in command of Regional Command for the capital region, he plans to seize the moment to meet with the new Kabul mayor, Engineer Mohammad Yunus Nowandish, in the near future. Turkey had also promised President Karzai it would undertake the asphalting of some major roads in Kabul.

¶ 16. (C) In what it hopes will be a major showcase project in Kabul, Ozturk said Turkey plans to refurbish and modernize Kabul's 400-bed Jamhuriat Hospital. The capital's largest public hospital was built with Chinese funding, but it is hardly functional as the Chinese did not provide staff or high-quality equipment to run it. The Turkish Ministry of Health has made an assessment, plans to renovate the building, and intends bring Turkish physicians, nurses, and technical staff on a rotating basis to work and live there. Turkey hopes to turn the facility into a teaching hospital and turn it over gradually within a 4-5 year period to a primarily Afghan medical staff. Turkey is seeking a partner in this project. Ambassador suggested a good model for this project is the Afghan National Army hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan's best hospital, where 40-50 U.S. military physicians and medical staff work along side Afghan Army staff as teachers and mentors. The Ambassador offered assistance, if needed, in linking Ozturk's staff with U.S. military medical personnel for an exchange of lessons learned/best practices.

AFGHAN POLICE TRAINING IN TURKEY) IF EUROPEANS PAY

¶ 17. (C) Ozturk said that Turkey is pleased with the results of its police training efforts to date. Turkey is currently teaching the MOI-approved Basic 8-Week Afghan National Police (ANP) curriculum at the Turkish Training Center in Maidan Shahr/Wardak, and is prepared to do more. Ozturk explained that Turkey is working on a plan to host 3-4,000 Afghan National Police at a police training center in Turkey. This

would, Ozturk remarked, be in line with the goals of Interior Minister Atmar, who had spoken, most recently at the February 4-5 NATO Defense Ministerial in Istanbul, of the need to send Afghan National Police outside Afghan given the shortage of training slots in Afghanistan. Turkey could host Afghan trainees for a one-year course (that usually takes two years) in advanced police training. Turkey would supply the dedicated facility, the firing ranges, the labs, and other installations. The challenge, Ozturk continued, would be finding a donor to pay additional expenses such as housing, health care, food, and translators. He noted that since EUPOL had failed to meet its target for the past two years, and currently filled only 272 of its targeted 400 slots in Afghanistan, he felt it would be appropriate to ask European nations to pick up these expenses. Separately, Ozturk lamented that EUPOL had focused on what he characterized as "Turkey-bashing" (presumably a reference to EUPOL/Afghanistan's failure to conclude a bilateral security agreement with Turkey) rather than owning up to the organization's own failure to meet the personnel targets it had set.

JOWZSJAN PRT: DAMN THE TORPEDOES

¶8. (C) Turkey is prepared to move forward in a matter of weeks with establishing its second PRT in Afghanistan in northern Jowzjan Province, Ozturk stated, with or without German and Swedish support on provincial security arrangements. "Time for talking is over," and final decisions need to be made, he said, adding that Turkey had been "cheated" in recent discussions on security cooperation in Berlin, and regards as unacceptable the German suggestion that its proposed Jowzjan facility be designated a "provincial advisory reconstruction team." Turkey will model its new PRT after Wardak, but Jowzjan may be slightly larger, (there are 131 Turks in Wardak), with almost half the contingent comprised of civilians. Turkish security forces will provide protection for the PRT and its staff, and will be able to draw on Turkish helicopter assets under Regional Command-Capital for medevac capability, but will not patrol in Jowzjan (something Ozturk claimed neither the Germans or the Swedes do) nor engage in any offensive military action. Turkey will not ask for security assistance, unless, Ozturk said, it is forced to request a quick reaction force from ISAF in the event of a major attack, a contingency he clearly felt unlikely in the far north.

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¶9. (C) Jowzjan is impoverished and lacking insurgents, Ozturk emphasized, and there is much development work Turkey can contribute there. Health care, road building, education are the main kinds of projects Turkey expects to undertake in the province. Turkey hopes to open schools for girls, offer police training, and provide additional Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLETs) in Jowzjan. Other projects under consideration are a vocational training center linked to an industrial park, and irrigation system improvements. Ozturk insisted that ethnic connections in the north were not driving Turkey's interest in establishing its new PRT in Jowzjan.

¶10. (C) Comment: Ambassador Ozturk made clear his country's ambitions for a more stable and secure, developed and prosperous Afghanistan. We share these goals, together with the goal of seeing greater US-Turkey partnership on the ground. In addition to the proposed cooperation on the hospital in Kabul, we are also working through the Turkish PRT in Wardak and at the Embassy to explore ways to support Turkish efforts to build capacity in Afghanistan's marble industry. A USAID-hosted marble seminar in Herat later this month was rescheduled to avoid conflicting with a marble seminar in Turkey that would have prevented 10 Turkish companies from joining the Afghan event. But as we build our partnership, we must work with the Turks to ensure we do not

exceed their own capacity on the ground. (This lunch, for example, required Turkish participants from Wardak and Mazar, as the Embassy's own staff is very small and junior.) Even our Embassy pays high transaction costs to plan and implement projects with other donors. We must, in the main, remain focused on our key partner, Afghanistan, especially at a time when our strategy calls for rapid progress on the ground.

Eikenberry